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CULTURAL CHANGE AMONG THE WISCONSIN WINNEBAGO

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Introduction

Cultural change is one of the outstanding factors in the life of the Winnebago today. It is important to mention at the outset, however, that the following article does not purport to trace the long history of cultural change among the Winnebago, nor does it have any claim as a complete analysis; but, because of space limitations, it will serve merely as a passing observation of cultural change in a particular Indian group. The study is based primarily on observation of one small group of Winnebago during a period of five weeks. None the less, these data seem to comprise a fairly, though far from completely representative sample with which to work.

The Indians observed were family groups from almost all of the Winnebago communities scattered throughout the central part of the state. Our group, consisting of some 45 families, was predominately one of Wisconsin Winnebago, but also included three Winnebago families from Nebraska and one family each of the Chippewa, Menomini and Potawatomi tribes. The presence of these minorities within the larger group of Wisconsin Winnebago offered an interesting study of inter-land and intra-tribal contrasts.

The Wisconsin Winnebago prefer to live more or less independently in their native territory, Wisconsin, rather than join their friends and relatives on the Winnebago reservation located, by a whim of the government, in Nebraska. There is, however, a constant exchange of visits between the two groups.

In Wisconsin many of the Winnebago earn a living in the winter by trapping for the fur market, and in the summer by following various Wisconsin crops. The harvesting begins in the spring with the strawberry season, and ends in the fall with the gathering of cranberries.